



PANHANDLE

BENEWAH, BONNER, BOUNDARY, KOOTENAI, & SHOSHONE COUNTIES

EMPLOYMENT TRENDS

The Panhandle's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate edged up from 8.0 percent in April to 8.1 percent in May. Businesses remained uncertain about the strength of the U.S. economic recovery and the prospects for the summer tourist season, so they hired fewer workers than they normally do. The Panhandle added 1,490 *Nonfarm Payroll Jobs* between April and May. In an average year in the four prior years, the Panhandle added 1,725 jobs between April and May. Industries adding fewer jobs this year than normal included logging, gravel pits, trucking, retail stores, hotels and motels, restaurants, amusement centers, and nonprofit organizations.

All Other Manufacturing (all manufacturing industries except *Lumber & Wood Products*) remained constant at 4,410 jobs between April and May. The May numbers do not reflect the layoff of 118 people from the Harpers furniture plant in Post Falls that occurred at the end of May. All *Other Manufacturing* employment peaked at 4,704 in November 2000. Since then, plastics, electronics, metal products, furniture, printing, newspaper publishing, and machine shops have cut jobs.

Despite the sluggishness of the Panhandle economy, the unemployment rate of 8.1 percent this May was significantly below the 8.8 percent of May 2001. A year ago, Shoshone County was still reeling from the closure of its largest employer, the Sunshine mine. The rest of the Panhandle experienced wrenching layoffs in lumber, electronics, retail, and manufacturing in early 2001. In addition, layoffs by Spokane employers put many Panhandle residents out of work. Contributing to the high unemployment in May 2001 was exceptionally cool, rainy weather that idled many loggers, construction workers, and farm laborers.

AREA DEVELOPMENTS

Benewah County

- The U.S. Forest Service gave the St. Maries downtown improvement project an \$11,670 grant to put up eight historical signs and to build two small kiosks where visitors will find maps, brochures, and fliers about attractions and community events. The kiosks will complement the \$2.1 million

Panhandle Table 1: Labor Force & Employment

	May 2002*	April 2001	May 2001	% Change From	
				Last Month	Last Year
INDIVIDUALS BY PLACE OF RESIDENCE					
Seasonally Adjusted					
Civilian Labor Force	91,710	91,690	89,040	0.0	3.0
Unemployed	7,440	7,340	7,830	1.4	-5.0
% of Labor Force Unemployed	8.1%	8.0%	8.8%		
Total Employment	84,270	84,350	81,210	-0.1	3.8
Unadjusted					
Civilian Labor Force	91,620	91,390	88,930	0.3	3.0
Unemployed	7,100	8,660	7,490	-18.0	-5.2
% of Labor Force Unemployed	7.7%	9.5%	8.4%		
Total Employment	84,520	82,730	81,440	2.2	3.8
JOBS BY PLACE OF WORK					
Nonfarm Payroll Jobs**	68,390	66,900	67,350	2.2	1.5
Goods-Producing Industries	13,230	12,760	13,890	3.7	-4.8
Mining	550	540	870	1.9	-36.8
Construction	4,540	4,140	4,660	9.7	-2.6
Manufacturing	8,140	8,080	8,360	0.7	-2.6
Lumber & Wood Products	3,730	3,670	3,770	1.6	-1.1
All Other Manufacturing	4,410	4,410	4,590	0.0	-3.9
Service-Producing Industries	55,160	54,140	53,460	1.9	3.2
Transportation	1,360	1,350	1,380	0.7	-1.4
Communication & Utilities	1,110	1,090	1,080	1.8	2.8
Wholesale Trade	2,180	2,160	2,210	0.9	-1.4
Retail Trade	14,570	14,210	14,840	2.5	-1.8
Finance, Insurance & Real Estate	2,780	2,670	2,690	4.1	3.3
Service & Miscellaneous	18,280	17,990	16,770	1.6	9.0
Government Administration	9,310	9,120	8,880	2.1	4.8
Government Education	5,570	5,550	5,610	0.4	-0.7

* Preliminary estimate

**Full- or part-time jobs of people who worked for or received wages in the pay period including the 12th of the month

downtown improvement project currently underway. Timber Plus, the St. Maries economic development organization, applied for the grant. It recently applied for another Forest Service grant that could provide up to \$55,000 to build a visitor's center.

- Fernwood residents Bob and Sandie Scott recently purchased Kay-Dee Lanes, the bowling alley in St. Maries. In early July, they reopened the bowling alley's restaurant and bar and renamed it St. Maries Bowling Restaurant and Lounge.
- Don and Lani McCosker reopened the Gem State Grill in late June. The restaurant on Main Avenue in St. Maries had closed a year ago. It serves breakfast, lunch, and dinner.

Kootenai County

- Discount Communications, the Coeur d'Alene-based television satellite dish and cellular telephone company, saw its employment grow from three jobs three years ago to more than 50 today. Needing more room, it is moving from its 2,800-square-foot space in Harbor Plaza to an 8,000-square-foot building at 315 West Dalton Avenue. Discount Communications has become one of the largest TV dish retailers in the U.S. It has distribution and service centers in Washington and California. Discount Com-

munications expects to hire 15 more people in the next few months and to celebrate the grand opening of its new location in September.

- Gottschalk's is selling its 44,000-square-foot store at the Silver Lake Mall in Coeur d'Alene to the Bon Marché. The Gottschalk's department store, which employs 34 people, will close by the end of July. The Bon Marché, which operates upscale department stores, will move into the store by the beginning of November. The Bon Marché plans to keep its 4,600-square-foot boutique in the Coeur d'Alene Resort's shopping plaza in downtown Coeur d'Alene. This is the third time the Silver Lake space has changed hands. Fred Meyers opened a department store there when the Silver Lake Mall opened in 1989. A couple of years later, Lamont's moved into the space. After Lamont's closed all its stores in 2000, Gottschalk's moved into the space.
- Mullan Square, a new mini-mall next to the Post Falls Wal-Mart, recently welcomed its first two tenants—a Papa Murphy's Take 'n' Bake Pizza outlet and a Great Clips hair salon. Radio Shack soon will open a 2,520-square-foot store there. A fourth tenant, Aroma Basics, plans to open at the beginning of September. Owners Bill and Donna White will manufacture and sell natural bath and beauty products. The store also will sell refurbished antiques and gift items developed by Donna White. Mullan Square will be completely full when Washington Mutual Bank opens a 3,500-square-foot branch there in October.
- Several auto dealerships are moving from Coeur d'Alene's Fourth Street to the auto row developing along Interstate 90 in Post Falls. The location along the freeway gives the dealerships high visibility and access to higher volumes of traffic.
- Knudtsen Chevrolet will open its Post Falls dealership in January. It is building a 43,000-square-foot building on six acres, giving it five times more room than its present location on Fourth Street. Currently, its inventory averages about 80 used and 70 new vehicles. In Post Falls, its inventory will expand to 200 used and 125 new vehicles.
- Midway Nissan was one of the first dealers to locate to Post Falls. Midway's owner, Joe Arrotta, recently purchased Ponderosa Motors-Chrysler/Jeep in Coeur d'Alene. He plans to move the dealership from 1902 North Fourth Street to a 16,000-square-foot building under construction next to Midway Nissan. The building is slated for completion by December.
- Coeur d'Alene Subaru has purchased three acres north of the freeway near Nissan Midway and the Knudtsen Chevrolet property. It plans to move into its new 14,000-square-foot building in late fall.
- GoKart Family Fun closed in early June after nine years of providing entertainment at 3515 West Seltice in the Huetter area between Coeur d'Alene and Post Falls. GoKart's owners cited rising insurance costs and increased competition as the reasons for the closure. The Triple Play entertainment complex in Hayden is preparing to add go-cart rides, miniature golf, and bumper boats. About 20 people worked for GoKart Family Fun.

- Burger Heaven, which closed a year ago, reopened in early July. New owners John Herron and his son, Travis, hired six people to work at the restaurant at 731 Highway 53 in Rathdrum.
- Hayden Home Furnishings recently opened at 9521 North Government Way in Hayden. The furniture store's 4,000-square-foot display room features dining room sets, china hutches, sofas, love seats, Italian leather furniture, statues, and fountains
- The Sherman Mall at 412 Sherman Avenue in downtown Coeur d'Alene recently welcomed a new tenant, Road Trip, which is an educational toy and gift store. It sells everything from stationery to gardening equipment, including many books, toys, games, and stuffed animals.
- S.O.S. Surplus, the new store at 1506 Northwest Boulevard in Coeur d'Alene, sells surplus military gear, outdoor equipment, models, video games, and paintball supplies.
- Capers Restaurant, a restaurant featuring gourmet Italian food that had been closed for several months, recently reopened at 315 Walnut under new ownership. One of the new owners, Michael Pierce, has been a chef at the Coeur d'Alene Resort for 11 years.
- This spring, Triple R Denture Clinic & Laboratory moved into a larger building it constructed next to its longtime location at 1028 North Fourth Street in Coeur d'Alene.
- Another dental laboratory is expanding. Quality Dental Laboratory plans to move from its current 1,200-square-foot building at 120 East Fourth Street in Post Falls to a 4,500-square-foot building at 329 North William Street, which is under construction. After it moves in early September, it will expand its staff from 11 to 20.
- Tanglewood Bistro & Pub recently moved a few doors west of its former location to the former Wilson Frank space on the northwest corner of Sherman Avenue and Fifth Street. The move not only gives the restaurant more exposure to the busiest part of downtown Coeur d'Alene, but also allows it to expand.

Shoshone County

- The Wallace School District plans to build a new 65,000-square-foot junior-senior high school in Wallace. The new building will be southwest of the 54-year-old building it will replace. Although the school building will be razed, the gymnasium will be preserved in hopes that a nonprofit organization will use it. About 300 students from grades seven through twelve attend Wallace Junior-Senior High School. The \$7 million construction project will begin this summer and be completed in time for the beginning of the school year in September 2004.

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